Housing Market Case Study

Human Agency, Structure and the Persistence of the UK Housing Crisis

An Eighteen-Year Case Study in Housing, Human Agency and Change

Michael A Griffin
Founder of Arbitrium

Purpose

This case study examines the journey of a series of housing proposals — from Genesis through NPFM to HIPP — and uses that experience to explore a broader question:

What can a long-running attempt to introduce unfamiliar thinking into a complex institutional system teach us about Human Agency, structure, responsibility, learning and progress?

The study does not seek to prove that any one housing proposal would have solved the UK housing crisis.

Its purpose is to examine what happened as ideas moved through government, the Civil Service, banks, MPs and other parts of the housing system, and what that journey may reveal about our collective capacity to respond to persistent problems.

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The Housing Market Case Study is supported by a separate evidence base. Together these records allow the reader to distinguish the lived case, the documentary record, independent housing evidence and the original housing propositions.

A. Case Chronology and Evidence Record

A chronological record of the key events, meetings, correspondence and development of Genesis, NPFM and HIPP. The record distinguishes between documented evidence, personal recollection and later interpretation.

Available separately as the Housing Crisis / Human Agency Case Study data file.

B. Original Correspondence and Documentary Evidence

The surviving letters and documents from the Bank of England, government departments, Ministers, MPs, banks and other organisations that form the documentary record behind the case study.

Available separately as the Case Study Evidence File.

C. Supporting Evidence Research Pack

Independent research examining the wider housing context against which the personal case developed, including long-term housing supply, the distinction between England and UK figures, Housing Minister turnover and continuity, major housing-policy interventions, and the relationship between repeated policy change and the continuing housing outcome.

Available separately as the Housing Market Case Study - Supporting Evidence Research Pack.

D. Original Housing Proposal Documents

The surviving original documents provide a contemporary record of how the housing proposition developed over time:

Genesis — December 2008
The original 31-page proposal developed in response to the financial and property crisis. It introduced the separation of land and buildings and explored the financial, legal and housing implications of doing so.

NPFM — New Property Funding Model
The later, more concise development of the underlying funding proposition, including separate valuation and financing of building and land.

HIPP — Home Investment Purchase Plan
The later practical application of the proposition, increasingly focused on creating an additional housing market, greater affordability and a trial development.

Together, the three documents provide primary evidence of the evolution of the thinking described in the case study.

Section 1 — Purpose and Approach

1.1 Why this case study exists

For more than fifty years I worked within the UK housing and development industry. During that time, and particularly following the financial crisis of 2008, I became increasingly concerned that the continuing shortage of housing — especially genuinely affordable housing — could not be addressed simply by repeatedly adjusting individual parts of the housing system.

In the immediate aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, I began developing and putting forward a different approach.

The first proposal, called **Genesis**, arose directly from the consequences of the banking collapse and sought to explore a different relationship between housing, land, finance and risk. It was considered by the Bank of England and subsequently developed further as my understanding of the wider problem evolved.

That initial thinking did not remain static. As I encountered different parts of the housing, banking and political systems, the proposal itself evolved. Genesis developed into the New Property Funding Model (NPFM), which explored separating the value and financing of land and buildings. That in turn led to the Housing Investment Purchase Plan (HIPP), through which I sought a more practical route for applying the underlying principle to the delivery and purchase of affordable homes.

Over the years that followed, I corresponded with and met MPs, Housing Ministers, civil servants, banks and others involved in housing and government. At different stages the proposals attracted interest and consideration. In 2018, for example, the Housing Minister confirmed that officials had been reviewing NPFM to understand how it might operate in practice within the existing legal and policy framework.

It was never implemented.

The purpose of this case study, however, is **not to reopen the argument that NPFM should have been adopted, nor to claim that it would have solved the housing crisis.**

Something potentially more useful has emerged from looking back at what happened.

1.2 A different question

At the time, my attention was naturally concentrated on the housing problem and on trying to get people with the ability to influence it to understand and explore a different approach.

Today I am looking at the same experience from a different perspective.

My subsequent work on **Human Agency — the capacity of people to make intentional, helpful choices and act upon them** — raises a different question:

What can the journey of an unfamiliar idea through the UK housing and political system tell us about the way people and institutions respond to difficult, persistent problems?

The distinction matters.

This case study is therefore not principally an examination of whether the housing proposal was right or wrong. It is an examination of what happened around it.

Why did some people become curious while others did not?

What happened when responsibility moved between individuals, departments and governments?

How did established structures, political priorities, perceived risk, legislation and institutional boundaries affect the choices available to individuals?

What happened when Ministers changed and new leadership brought different priorities?

Where did individuals exercise agency despite the constraints of the system, and where did the structure itself appear to restrict their ability or willingness to act?

And, perhaps most importantly, when responsibility for different elements of a complex problem is distributed across many people and institutions:

Who owns the overall outcome?

1.3 Housing as the case, not the conclusion

Housing provides an unusually useful environment in which to explore these questions because there is no single lever capable of solving the housing shortage.

Land availability, planning, infrastructure, construction capacity, skills, materials, private and public finance, mortgage affordability, social housing, local government, central government and legislation all interact.

Each involves people and organisations making choices within their own responsibilities, pressures and constraints.

It is therefore possible for individuals throughout such a system to make decisions that appear entirely reasonable from their own position while the collective system continues to produce an outcome that almost everyone agrees needs to change.

The persistence of the UK housing crisis makes that question particularly relevant.

Rather than asking simply **"What policy should government introduce next?"**, this case study allows us to ask another question:

What human capacity is required for all the different parts of a complex system to work towards a sufficiently shared and sustained objective?

That is where housing begins to become a case study in Human Agency.

1.4 Leadership and continuity

There is another dimension that will be examined as the case develops.

Housing is a long-term problem requiring decisions and actions whose consequences extend far beyond an individual political term.

Yet during much of the period covered by this case study, responsibility for housing at ministerial level changed repeatedly.

That raises an important structural question.

How does a system maintain sufficient continuity of vision and purpose to solve a problem measured in decades when the individuals leading that system may occupy their positions for only a fraction of that time?

This is not a criticism of individual Ministers or of any particular political party. It is a question about the relationship between **Human Agency and structure**.

A structure that depends upon particular individuals remaining in place may lose direction when those individuals change. A stronger structure should enable people exercising their own agency to change while preserving sufficient clarity about the longer-term objective towards which they are collectively working.

The housing experience may therefore provide a practical example through which that relationship can be examined.

1.5 How the evidence will be treated

This case study covers events extending over more than fifteen years.

Much of the original email correspondence no longer exists following the closure of the business and its associated email account. However, a substantial collection of original hard-copy correspondence has survived.

The case study will therefore distinguish clearly between three forms of information:

Documented evidence — surviving contemporary correspondence and other records that establish what happened.

Personal recollection — meetings, conversations and events that I remember but for which the original documentary evidence is no longer available.

Later interpretation — observations made now, particularly through the developing understanding of Human Agency, about what those events may tell us.

Personal recollection will not be presented as documentary fact, and later interpretation will not be presented as proof of what motivated another individual.

That distinction is particularly important because the purpose of the study is not to allocate blame.

It is to understand behaviour.

1.6 The question at the heart of the case

The housing proposals travelled through banks, government departments, MPs, Ministers and the Civil Service. At various times people listened, questioned, supported, investigated, referred, delayed or declined them.

Every one of those responses involved human beings operating within a structure.

The question this case study will explore is therefore larger than what happened to one housing proposal:

When a society faces a persistent problem that almost everyone agrees needs solving, what determines whether the people and institutions involved are collectively capable of doing something genuinely different?

The history that follows provides one opportunity to explore that question.

Section 2 — 2008–2010: Genesis — Responding to a Crisis

2.1 The financial crisis creates a different question

The origins of this story lie in the financial crisis of 2008.

At the time I was working within the housing industry and saw at close quarters the consequences of the collapse in property values and the tightening of bank lending that followed.

My response was not simply to ask how the housing industry could recover from the crisis. I began questioning whether something within the way property itself was valued and financed had contributed to the problem.

Property was conventionally treated as a single asset even though it consisted of two very different elements: the building and the land beneath it.

Buildings could be constructed, costed and replaced. Land values behaved differently, being heavily influenced by location, availability, confidence, finance and the wider property market.

That distinction became increasingly important to my thinking.

The immediate problem following the crash was also a banking problem. Property assets acquired or financed during the boom had fallen substantially in value, while banks needed to hold reserves against impaired property lending.

I began considering whether there might be another way of structuring property finance that could reduce some of that exposure and release capital while creating a more stable basis for future lending.

The proposal I developed was called Genesis.

2.2 Taking Genesis to the Bank of England

Rather than keeping the idea within the housing industry, I sent Genesis to the **Bank of England**.

In February 2009, Andrew G Haldane of the Bank responded.

The significance of the response today is not that the Bank accepted Genesis. It did not.

What matters is that the proposal appears to have received genuine consideration.

The Bank said it had read the proposal "with interest", identified aspects that were appealing from its perspective, but also raised substantive concerns about whether the model would achieve all of its intended objectives.

That distinction matters to this case study.

An unfamiliar idea had arrived from outside the institution. The response was neither acceptance nor simple rejection. Someone engaged sufficiently with the proposition to question it.

Looking back through the lens of Human Agency, this provides an interesting first example of what constructive response to an unfamiliar idea can look like:

curiosity does not require agreement.

An individual or institution can listen, examine, challenge and still decide that an idea has weaknesses.

Indeed, constructive challenge can itself create learning.

That was certainly the case for me.

2.3 From banking to the wider housing system

Genesis began as a response to circumstances created by the financial crash, but considering the Bank's response and continuing to examine the problem caused my thinking to broaden.

The financial system could not really be separated from the housing system.

Finance influenced what could be built.

Mortgage availability influenced what people could buy.

Purchasing power influenced house prices.

House prices influenced land values.

Land values influenced development viability.

The different parts were interconnected.

By June 2009 the proposal had also reached the **Department for Communities and Local Government**.

A response dated 29 June from Richard McCarthy CBE said the Department welcomed ideas from experts, had studied the paper and regarded several of its proposals as interesting, including those concerned with housing-market stability and regulatory costs. The response also explained measures government was already taking.

Again, the proposal had not been accepted.

But neither had it simply disappeared.

Within months of Genesis being developed, both the Bank of England and the government department responsible for housing had considered it sufficiently seriously to provide substantive responses.

For me, that created a reasonable basis for continuing.

2.4 The first experience of the political system

My recollection is that around 2010 a solicitor friend helped arrange a meeting involving the Housing Minister.

I presently believe that Minister was Caroline Flint, although the surviving evidence we have assembled so far does not establish either the identity or exact date, so this remains to be verified.

My memory of the encounter with the Minister is that there was little appetite to explore the proposal. I came away feeling that I had effectively been fobbed off.

What happened with the civil servants was different.

I remember having a reasonable discussion with officials. They appeared willing to understand what I was proposing and indicated that they would take the matter forward and discuss aspects of it with the Treasury.

That distinction stayed with me.

I had encountered different responses from people operating within essentially the same system.

I subsequently attempted to find out what had happened but received no substantive further response.

The proposal appeared simply to have stopped moving.

At the time I did not know why.

2.5 The first question raised by the case

Looking back now, it would be easy to turn this early experience into a criticism of a Minister, government or the Civil Service.

That would miss the more interesting question.

The Bank of England had engaged and challenged.

A government department had studied the proposal and identified elements it considered interesting.

Civil servants, according to my recollection, had been willing to discuss it further and indicated that they would take aspects of the proposal forward.

I had responded to challenge by continuing to develop my own thinking.

And yet, from my perspective at the time, the idea eventually appeared to stop moving.

Nobody involved necessarily needed to behave improperly for that to happen.

Each person was operating with different authority, priorities, information, pressures and constraints.

At that stage I did not possess the language of Human Agency through which to understand what I was experiencing.

I simply knew that an idea which appeared to have generated some interest had failed to produce further progress.

Looking back, that raises an early question which would follow the journey for many years:

What determines whether an unfamiliar idea continues to move through a complex system once the people encountering it have completed their own immediate part in the process?

That question would follow the housing journey for many years.

Section 3 — From Genesis to NPFM: Learning and Adapting

3.1 The idea did not stand still

The apparent end of the Genesis discussions could have been the end of the matter.

It wasn't.

My response was to continue examining both the problem and the proposal itself.

The Bank of England's response had challenged aspects of Genesis rather than simply rejecting it. My subsequent dealings with government had also exposed me to another part of the problem: even an idea that attracted some interest had to operate within an established financial, legal, political and institutional system.

That experience caused my thinking to develop.

Genesis had originated largely from the circumstances surrounding the financial crisis. What increasingly concerned me was something broader: the way property itself was valued and financed, and the consequences this had for housing supply, affordability and market stability.

The result was the **New Property Funding Model — NPFM.**

3.2 Separating land from buildings

At the heart of NPFM was a relatively simple observation.

A property consists of land and a building, but the conventional funding and valuation system largely treats them as one asset.

My proposition was that they should instead be capable of being valued and financed separately.

This was not simply an accounting distinction.

Land and buildings behave differently.

The cost and value of constructing a building can be assessed with reasonable reference to its physical characteristics and replacement cost. Land value is much more dependent upon location, planning status, scarcity, market confidence and what somebody is prepared and able to pay for it.

My experience following the financial crash had made the significance of that distinction particularly apparent to me.

The surviving NPFM material shows how far this thinking had developed. It proposed separating property into two elements — initially described as **Buildhold** and **Landhold** — and considered how doing so might create different funding arrangements and potentially reduce some of the instability created when the two were treated as a single asset.

Whether that proposition was ultimately right is not the central issue for this case study.

What matters at this stage is that **the proposal had changed as a consequence of learning**.

3.3 The problem becomes larger than finance

As NPFM developed, my focus also broadened beyond the banking problem that had originally stimulated Genesis.

I had spent much of my working life in housing and development and was increasingly concerned by a contradiction that seemed to persist regardless of government initiatives.

Britain needed substantially more homes, particularly homes that ordinary people could afford.

Yet the principal private housing market could only build homes at approximately the rate at which people were able to buy them.

The NPFM material reflected my view that housing supply therefore could not simply be increased indefinitely by asking the existing private development market to build more.

Something different was required.

My thinking increasingly became concerned with creating an additional housing market, rather than simply attempting to extract greater output from the existing one.

That distinction would eventually become central to HIPP.

3.4 Back into the institutional system

Developing NPFM meant taking the proposition back to many of the organisations whose participation would ultimately be necessary for anything to happen.

Banks mattered because the model depended upon finance.

Government mattered because housing policy, land, regulation and ultimately legislation were involved.

Local authorities, housing providers and developers mattered because homes still had to be planned, funded and built.

The idea therefore could not be developed successfully by one person acting alone, however strongly I believed in it.

It required other people to understand it sufficiently to challenge it, improve it, support it or provide a route through which it could be tested.

This began another long period of correspondence and conversations with banks, MPs, Ministers, civil servants and others.

The surviving evidence shows that the proposition was reaching senior levels. For example, in 2013 Lloyds Banking Group referred the NPFM proposal from the Chairman's office to senior executives responsible for corporate housebuilders and housing development for consideration.

During the same period correspondence also moved between Downing Street, the Deputy Prime Minister's office, the Treasury and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The idea was moving.

But movement and progress were not necessarily the same thing.

3.5 Encountering the structure

This period introduced me to another characteristic of large systems.

An individual could receive the proposal and reasonably conclude that responsibility belonged somewhere else.

Housing could refer to finance.

Finance could refer to housing.

An MP could be interested but constrained by parliamentary or constituency conventions.

A Minister could have responsibility but limited time.

A civil servant could understand an idea but not possess the authority to change policy.

A bank could consider the financial proposition but could not change legislation.

From the perspective of each individual, passing something to the person or organisation apparently better placed to deal with it could be an entirely reasonable response.

From the perspective of the idea travelling through the whole system, however, something different could happen.

Responsibility could continually move without anyone acquiring responsibility for the overall outcome.

I did not understand my experience in those terms at the time.

From my perspective I was attempting to find the person who could actually help move the proposal forward, and I became increasingly frustrated when one route led to another.

Looking back, however, this is an important distinction.

The people were operating within a structure, and that structure influenced the choices available to them.

3.6 A Human Agency question begins to emerge

There is a temptation when looking back at this period to divide people into those who "got it" and those who did not.

That would be too simplistic.

Some people showed curiosity. Some challenged the proposal. Some referred it elsewhere. Some apparently saw obstacles that I did not. And I was making choices too — including how I presented the proposition, how I interpreted other people's responses, how persistently I pursued them and how I changed the idea itself.

The emerging Human Agency question is therefore not:

Why wouldn't people listen to me?

It is something much more useful:

How does the structure within which a person operates affect what they see, what they believe they are responsible for, and the choices they consequently make?

The earlier encounter with the civil servant provides a particularly interesting example.

In one context I was an outsider attempting to introduce an unfamiliar proposal into government.

In another, I was the professional engaged by the **Royal Town Planning Institute to teach others how to value land**, with that same civil servant attending my training.

My knowledge had not fundamentally changed between those two settings.

The context in which that knowledge was encountered had.

That does not establish what the civil servant thought of me in either situation. We cannot know that.

But it raises a question that will become increasingly important to this case study and to the wider work on Human Agency:

How much of what we believe we are responding to is determined not simply by the information in front of us, but by our perception of the person, position and structure through which that information reaches us?

That question reaches well beyond housing.

Section 4 — Interest, Investigation and the Problem of Continuity

4.1 Persistence creates another opening

By the middle of the following decade, NPFM had not disappeared.

Neither had I.

I continued approaching people whom I believed might have the authority, influence or interest necessary to give the proposal serious consideration.

One of the most important people in that process was my then constituency **MP, Sarah Newton**.

My recollection of Sarah's involvement is positive. She did not have the authority herself to implement what I was proposing, but she was prepared to use the position she did have to help me reach those who might.

That distinction is important.

Within any structure, an individual may not possess the authority to produce the eventual outcome. They can nevertheless choose whether to use the agency available to them to help something progress.

The surviving correspondence demonstrates that Sarah did so.

4.2 Sajid Javid engages

In October 2017 Sarah Newton contacted the Department for Communities and Local Government on my behalf, seeking a meeting concerning NPFM.

On 17 November, the then Secretary of State, **Sajid Javid**, responded personally to her.

His response provides an important piece of documentary evidence.

He confirmed that he had read my NPFM paper and recognised my continuing interest in improving housing affordability. He and Housing Minister Alok Sharma were unable to meet me personally because of diary constraints.

But the response did not end there.

Javid offered an alternative.

He specifically invited me to meet one of his officials to discuss the proposals further and provided the contact through whom that meeting could be arranged.

For the purposes of this case study, the distinction is significant.

A Minister being unable to meet was a constraint.

It did not automatically determine the response.

There remained a choice about what happened next.

In this instance, the response was effectively:

I cannot do this personally, but here is another route through which the idea can be explored.

That is a small but useful example of Human Agency operating within structural constraint.

4.3 The Marsham Street meeting

I took up that opportunity.

On **18 January 2018**, I met with a team of civil servants at the Department's offices in **Marsham Street, London**, to discuss NPFM.

My recollection is that the officials approached the proposal with genuine interest.

This was not simply another occasion on which I delivered a document and waited for a response. There was discussion about how the proposal might work and what would be required to take it further.

Years later, in my 2023 letter to Keir Starmer, I described this as an **"enthusiastic team put together by Sajid Javid."** That retrospective account supports my recollection that this was, at the time, a particularly encouraging stage in the journey.

Something appeared to have changed.

After years of attempting to find a route through the system, I had reached people prepared to engage with the proposition in more practical terms.

4.4 From interest to investigation

The surviving ministerial correspondence subsequently provides something stronger than my recollection alone.

By 2018, government officials had been examining NPFM to determine how it could operate in practice.

Housing Minister **Dominic Raab** described NPFM as an interesting new model and confirmed that officials had been reviewing it against the existing legal and policy framework.

This is an important point in the history.

The proposition had travelled considerably further than simply being received by government.

Officials had begun asking the question that I had wanted someone to ask:

Could this actually work?

That does not mean government had accepted the model or concluded that it should be implemented.

But the nature of the response had changed.

The conversation had moved from **"What is this?"** towards **"What would be required to do this?"**

That is a very different stage in the life of an unfamiliar idea.

4.5 Three months later — the same system, a different setting

Three months after the Marsham Street meeting, an unexpected encounter gave me another perspective on what had happened.

On **18 April 2018**, while working freelance for the **Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)**, I was delivering a professional training session in London on **Land Viability**.

One of the civil servants involved in the government's consideration of NPFM attended my training session.

The circumstances were strikingly different from those of January.

At Marsham Street I had entered his professional environment as someone from outside government seeking consideration of an unfamiliar proposal.

Three months later, he had entered mine.

I was there in a professional capacity, engaged by the RTPI to provide training in an area directly related to land and development.

During a private conversation, I asked him what had happened to NPFM.

My recollection is that he told me that, following a change of Housing Minister, the incoming Minister had decided not to continue with it.

We currently have no surviving documentary evidence confirming that private conversation or the ministerial decision as he described it. It must therefore remain **my recollection of what I was told**, rather than an established documentary fact.

Nevertheless, the encounter stayed with me.

My professional knowledge had not suddenly changed between January and April.

What had changed was the context in which that knowledge was encountered.

I cannot know how the civil servant perceived me in either situation, and it would be wrong to speculate.

But looking back through the lens of Human Agency, the contrast raises a much broader question:

How much of what we believe we are responding to is influenced not simply by the information before us, but by our perception of the person, role and structure through which that information reaches us?

At the time, however, my reaction was much simpler.

I was frustrated.

My understanding from the conversation was that something officials had been prepared to investigate had stopped following a change in political leadership.

4.6 The obstacle becomes clearer

The documentary evidence provides another part of the picture.

NPFM required a different approach to property tenure and to the relationship between land and buildings.

That could not simply be introduced by an enthusiastic civil servant, a supportive MP or even necessarily by a Minister acting alone.

Legislation was involved.

The 2018 correspondence identified the requirement for primary and secondary legislation and explained that, because of pressure on Parliamentary time, progressing the necessary changes would not be a departmental priority.

This creates one of the most important distinctions in the entire case.

The documented response was not that the housing problem did not exist.

It was not simply that officials had refused to consider the proposal.

Nor, at this stage, was the recorded conclusion that the underlying concept was demonstrably impossible.

Instead, serious consideration had encountered the existing structure.

And changing that structure required political priority, Parliamentary time and sustained leadership.

4.7 Then the people changed

During this period, responsibility for housing at ministerial level changed again.

And again.

That matters because housing itself had not changed at anything approaching the same speed.

The shortage remained.

The affordability problem remained.

The long-term requirement to build homes remained.

But the individuals occupying some of the most influential positions within the system were changing.

Each incoming Minister understandably arrived with their own experience, priorities, pressures and limited period in which to demonstrate progress.

For an established policy supported by a permanent structure, such changes might be manageable.

For an unfamiliar idea requiring somebody to understand it, become sufficiently confident in it, navigate objections and ultimately champion structural change, leadership turnover presented a very different challenge.

Understanding had to be rebuilt.

Interest had to be recreated.

And responsibility could effectively begin again.

The April conversation had given me a personal glimpse of what that could mean in practice.

4.8 The difference one person can make — and its limitation

Sarah Newton's involvement also illustrates another side of the same issue.

My experience was that she made a genuine effort to help.

She could not personally change housing tenure or create Parliamentary time.

But she could write.

She could ask questions.

She could seek responses.

She could provide access that I could not create for myself.

And she did.

That is Human Agency too.

It demonstrates that structure constrains agency without necessarily eliminating it.

But it also exposes the limitation of relying upon particular individuals.

When a helpful MP, Minister, official or other advocate moves role or leaves the system, what happens to the progress that depended upon their personal involvement?

A long-term system cannot depend indefinitely upon finding another Sarah Newton.

4.9 The emerging paradox

By this stage the housing journey had produced what, looking back, appears to be a paradox.

I had spent years attempting to get the proposal seriously considered.

Eventually it was.

Officials investigated it.

And that investigation helped identify why implementing it would be difficult:

the existing structure would have to change.

But the structure that would have to change was also the structure through which permission to change it had to travel.

That does not make change impossible.

It does make the exercise of Human Agency particularly important.

Somebody, somewhere, ultimately has to make a conscious choice that the potential value of doing something differently justifies the effort, risk and disruption involved in changing what already exists.

Without that choice, the existing structure possesses an enormous advantage:

doing nothing fundamentally different requires no fundamental change.

4.10 A question of time

There is one final dimension to this period.

Parliamentary time is genuinely finite.

Ministers face competing priorities.

Civil servants cannot investigate every proposal indefinitely.

Those are real constraints and should not be dismissed.

But the housing problem operates on another timescale.

A decision not to pursue something because changing legislation might take several years does not make the underlying problem disappear during those years.

This creates another Human Agency question:

When the timescale required to change a system is longer than the timescale within which its current leaders expect to remain responsible for it, who chooses on behalf of the longer-term outcome?

That question is not really about NPFM.

It is about the capacity of institutions to address problems whose lifespan is longer than the tenure of the people temporarily responsible for solving them.

And by 2018, my experience of the UK housing system had begun to provide a real-world example of precisely that problem.

Section 5 — From NPFM to HIPP: Changing the Route, Not the Objective

5.1 A choice after rejection

By 2018, I could reasonably have concluded that I had reached the end of the road.

NPFM had progressed beyond correspondence. Government officials had considered how it might work in practice, but the structural and legislative changes required were regarded as too difficult to prioritise.

There was an obvious choice available to me:

stop.

I did not.

Instead, I began looking again at what I was actually trying to achieve and whether there was another route towards it.

This distinction is important.

My objective had never really been to persuade government to adopt something called NPFM.

The objective was to help create a housing system capable of delivering substantially more homes that ordinary people could afford.

NPFM was a means towards that objective.

Once the means encountered an obstacle, I began reconsidering the means rather than abandoning the objective.

That process eventually led to the **Housing Investment Purchase Plan — HIPP**.

5.2 From a funding model to a practical application

HIPP retained the underlying principle that had developed through NPFM: land and buildings did not necessarily have to be treated as a single financial asset.

But the emphasis changed.

Instead of beginning with the question of how the whole property funding system might be restructured, HIPP increasingly asked:

How could this principle actually be used to enable somebody on a lower income to acquire a new home?

The surviving HIPP material shows that shift clearly.

It describes separating the building and land elements of a property and using that separation to create multiple ways of funding a purchase. It also proposes different roles for local authorities, registered providers, contractors and financial institutions.

The proposal was becoming less about explaining an alternative financial theory and more about creating a mechanism through which the theory could be demonstrated.

5.3 A new market rather than more of the old one

HIPP also reflected something I had come to believe increasingly strongly from my experience within the housing industry.

The UK did not simply need existing private developers to build more homes.

Private housebuilding depended upon purchasers being able and willing to buy. Building substantially more homes without corresponding purchasing capacity would not, by itself, create a sustainable market for them.

My conclusion was that another market was required.

The HIPP material explicitly describes this as "The new market" and illustrates additional lower steps onto the housing ladder. The intention was to make home purchase achievable for people on lower incomes by changing how the land and building elements were acquired and financed.

This was therefore not simply another version of a conventional government Help to Buy scheme.

I was questioning the structure within which buying a home took place.

5.4 From argument to experiment

There was also an important change in my approach.

After years of explaining the proposal through papers, correspondence and meetings, I increasingly wanted to **demonstrate it.**

The HIPP material therefore called for a trial development.

The proposition was that a local authority, registered provider or Homes England could participate in a pilot through which the model could be tested in practice. The material explicitly states:

"What is first needed is a local authority, registered provider or Homes England trial case development."

This represented an important shift.

The question no longer needed to be:

Will government accept my argument?

It could become:

Will somebody allow us to test it?

That substantially reduced what I believed I was asking the system to do.

I was not asking everybody to agree that HIPP was the answer.

I was asking for an opportunity to discover whether it worked.

5.5 The difficulty of testing something unfamiliar

But a trial creates its own Human Agency problem.

Someone has to agree to be first.

For an established approach, precedent provides reassurance. Processes exist. Professional advisers understand their roles. Risks are familiar. Decisions can often be justified by pointing to what has happened before.

An unfamiliar approach offers much less protection.

A local authority considering a HIPP trial would not simply be considering the potential benefits. Individuals within that organisation would also have to consider legal advice, financial risk, professional responsibility, political scrutiny and what might happen should the experiment fail.

The same would apply to a bank.

The same would apply to a housing provider.

The same would apply to government.

From my perspective, a trial was a sensible way of reducing uncertainty.

From the perspective of somebody being asked to authorise that trial, **the fact that it had never been done before could itself increase uncertainty.**

Neither perspective is inherently irrational.

They simply begin from different positions.

5.6 The first-mover problem

This creates another recurring problem within innovation.

For something genuinely new to acquire evidence, somebody must first use it without the evidence that subsequent users will have available.

That person or organisation carries a disproportionate part of the uncertainty.

Yet the benefits, should the innovation succeed, may ultimately be enjoyed by many others.

This raises another Human Agency question:

Who chooses to carry the uncertainty necessary for everybody else eventually to have certainty?

That question applies well beyond housing.

Organisations frequently say they want innovation while simultaneously requiring evidence that an innovation already works.

But truly new approaches cannot satisfy both requirements at the beginning.

Somebody has to make an informed choice under uncertainty.

5.7 HIPP and the evolution of my own agency

Looking back, the transition from Genesis through NPFM to HIPP also provides evidence about my own behaviour.

I could have interpreted each setback purely as somebody else's failure to understand.

At times, particularly as the years passed, I undoubtedly became frustrated and sometimes did interpret responses in that way.

But my behaviour also shows something else.

I changed the proposition.

I changed how I explained it.

I changed whom I approached.

I moved from proposing systemic financial change towards seeking a practical demonstration.

And I increasingly separated the objective from the particular mechanism I had created to achieve it.

In the language I would use today, I was repeatedly encountering a stimulus, responding to it, learning from the resulting experience and making another choice.

I did not call that Human Agency.

The concept had not yet emerged in my thinking.

But looking backwards, the process is recognisable.

5.8 Structure and the purpose behind it

There is also a deeper structural issue emerging from this part of the story.

A system inevitably develops processes to protect itself.

Government has procedures.

Banks have lending criteria.

Local authorities have governance requirements.

Professionals have standards and responsibilities.

Those structures are necessary.

But structures exist ultimately to serve a purpose.

Difficulty can arise when compliance with the existing structure becomes easier to recognise and measure than progress towards the purpose for which the structure exists.

Housing provides a particularly stark example.

The purpose is not to operate a housing system.

The purpose is to house people.

That does not justify ignoring law, financial prudence or proper governance.

It does, however, create an important question:

When the existing structure repeatedly fails to produce the outcome for which it exists, whose responsibility is it to question the structure?

HIPP was, in part, my attempt to do that.

5.9 A distinction that would become important later

By this stage, another distinction had emerged which I did not fully articulate at the time.

There is a difference between **responsibility for a task** and **responsibility for an outcome.**

A civil servant can complete their task.

A bank can comply with its lending requirements.

A local authority can follow its procedures.

A Minister can deliver the policies within their portfolio.

A developer can build the homes it can commercially sell.

Every participant can therefore perform their individual role competently.

And Britain can still fail to build enough homes.

That is not necessarily evidence that any individual has failed.

It may instead reveal something about the structure through which their individual actions combine.

This brings the case back to one of the questions that has been quietly developing throughout the story:

Who owns the finish line?

When everybody owns part of the process but nobody possesses responsibility for the combined outcome, the collective result can become something that **nobody individually chose — but everybody collectively helped create.**

That is where the Housing Market Case Study begins moving beyond housing policy and into the territory of Human Agency.

Section 6 — Persistence, Political Change and a Wider Search

6.1 The problem had not gone away

By the time HIPP had emerged from the earlier NPFM thinking, many years had passed since Genesis was first sent to the Bank of England.

Governments had changed.

Housing Ministers had changed repeatedly.

Policies and initiatives had come and gone.

But the underlying problem that had originally motivated me remained.

Britain still needed more homes.

Affordability remained a major problem.

The relationship between land value, finance and housing delivery continued to concern me.

From my perspective, therefore, the failure to secure implementation of NPFM did not remove the reason for pursuing the underlying objective.

I continued.

Looking back now, that persistence can be interpreted in different ways.

At times it undoubtedly became frustrating. There were occasions when I felt people simply were not listening and when my own frustration affected how I responded.

But there was another side to it.

Every time the proposal encountered an obstacle, I had a choice about what to do next.

For many years my choice was to look for another route.

6.2 The changing political door

One of the difficulties was that the door I was knocking on kept changing.

Housing is inherently long-term. Land acquisition, planning, infrastructure, finance, construction and the creation of communities operate over many years.

Political responsibility for housing operated on a very different timescale.

Over the period during which I was developing and promoting Genesis, NPFM and HIPP, there was a succession of Housing Ministers and Secretaries of State.

By February 2025, in correspondence with the Irish Government, I described having advocated the approach to **thirteen successive UK Housing Ministers over fourteen years**.

That is my contemporary account of the experience and the exact ministerial chronology will be independently established later in this case study.

What matters here is the effect I experienced.

Each significant political change had the potential to alter priorities, relationships and understanding.

An idea does not retain institutional memory in the way a file retains information.

People have to understand it.

When the people change, some of that understanding may have to be created again.

6.3 Persistence can become repetition

There was also a danger for me.

Persistence is useful only while it continues to produce learning or another possibility.

Otherwise persistence can simply become repetition.

For a long time my underlying assumption remained that I needed to find the right person within the UK system who would understand the opportunity sufficiently to help make something happen.

That assumption drove much of my activity.

I approached MPs.

I approached Ministers.

I approached government departments.

I approached banks and others within the housing system.

Sometimes doors opened.

Sometimes the proposal was referred elsewhere.

Sometimes I received substantive engagement.

Sometimes little or nothing happened.

And when one route stopped, I generally looked for another.

There is an uncomfortable Human Agency question for me within that history too:

At what point does determination cease to be helpful persistence and become an automatic response of simply trying harder at the same thing?

I cannot assume that every failure to progress the proposal resulted from somebody else's inability to see it.

My own choices are part of the case.

6.4 Changing the proposition again

The development of HIPP suggests that I did eventually make a more fundamental change.

Rather than concentrating solely on persuading government to change the entire funding structure, I increasingly looked for a practical route through which the underlying principle could be demonstrated.

The HIPP material proposed a trial development involving a local authority, registered provider or Homes England.

It also broadened the potential participants in housing delivery.

The intention was to use the separation of land and building values to create more affordable routes into home ownership and to enable organisations other than traditional volume housebuilders to participate more directly in delivery.

The objective remained recognisable.

The route towards it continued to evolve.

6.5 Returning to national politics

In March 2023, with another UK political change potentially approaching, I made another choice.

Having spent more than ten years attempting to persuade Conservative-led governments to pursue the proposal, I wrote **to Sir Keir Starmer**, then Leader of the Opposition.

I also copied the correspondence to senior members of his team with responsibilities relevant to housing and the economy.

My letter was direct about my frustration.

But it also showed that the proposition was continuing to develop.

I set out seven potential benefits I believed NPFM could provide, including increased affordable housing, wider access to home ownership, investment in existing housing stock, reduced government funding requirements and greater housing-market stability.

Importantly, I described HIPP as the means through which NPFM could be delivered.

The relationship between the two had therefore become explicit:

NPFM represented the underlying funding proposition; HIPP was becoming the practical means through which I believed it could be applied.

The letter also recorded my recollection of the earlier progress under Sajid Javid and my belief that this had not subsequently been followed through by succeeding Ministers.

Once again I was attempting to carry accumulated knowledge across a political boundary.

6.6 The political label changes; the problem does not

My approach to the Labour opposition illustrates something else about the journey.

The housing problem was never, for me, fundamentally Conservative or Labour.

Different governments might favour different mechanisms, funding arrangements or ideological approaches.

But people needing somewhere affordable to live did not become a different problem when the governing party changed.

Neither did the physical requirements of building homes.

Land was still required.

Finance was still required.

Infrastructure was still required.

People with skills were still required.

Someone still had to accept risk.

Someone still had to buy or fund the finished home.

The political framework could change considerably while many of the underlying realities remained.

That raises another question for the case:

How effectively can a long-term national objective survive when the language, priorities and ownership surrounding it are repeatedly redefined by shorter political cycles?

6.7 Looking outside the UK system

Eventually my search widened beyond Britain.

In February 2025 I wrote to James Browne TD, then an Irish Housing Minister, setting out the proposition in a deliberately simplified form:

Cause. Solution. Implementation.

The significance of that letter for this case study is not whether Ireland ultimately accepted the proposal.

It shows how far my own thinking had travelled.

The original Genesis proposal had emerged from a British banking crisis.

Sixteen years later, I was presenting the underlying housing proposition to another national government and asking whether the principle might have wider application.

The terminology had developed again.

I described separating the freehold into **Household** and **Landhold**, legally connected without relying upon conventional leasehold.

I also argued that this could allow local authorities, housing bodies and contractors to play different roles in creating affordable housing.

The underlying thought had survived.

Its expression had continued to change.

6.8 What had actually been developing?

Looking at this journey chronologically creates a possibility I could not see while I was living it.

I believed I was developing a housing solution.

And I was.

But something else was developing at the same time.

I was repeatedly experiencing what happens when human beings encounter:

- unfamiliar ideas
- established structures
- professional boundaries
- uncertainty
- perceived risk
- changes of leadership
- competing priorities
- responsibility divided between organisations
- frustration
- rejection
- opportunity
- the possibility of choosing another response

I experienced those things in other people.

They experienced them in me.

I watched some people become curious and others appear resistant.

I experienced individuals who used the authority available to them to help and others who appeared constrained by the positions they occupied.

I saw ideas gain momentum and lose it when people changed.

And throughout that experience, I was making choices of my own.

I became frustrated.

I sometimes blamed the system.

I persisted.

I adapted.

I learned.

I changed the proposal.

And I kept looking for another way forward.

6.9 From housing towards Human Agency

I did not spend those years consciously developing a theory of Human Agency.

That interpretation came later.

Nor should the history now be rewritten to suggest that Genesis, NPFM or HIPP were secretly Human Agency projects.

They were attempts to address problems I saw within housing.

But experience changes what we subsequently become capable of seeing.

Looking backwards from my work today, I can recognise that those years exposed me repeatedly to a question much larger than housing:

What actually determines how a human being responds in a particular situation, at a particular moment?

That question now sits at the heart of my work on Human Agency.

The housing journey did not by itself create Human Agency or Arbitrium.

But it increasingly appears to have been one of the places in which the experiences that eventually contributed to them were being accumulated.

What felt at the time like years of frustration may therefore have produced something I could not then see.

The struggle to change one system was teaching me something about how **human beings operate within systems.**

And that creates the possibility that the experience may yet contribute to the original objective in an entirely different way.

Perhaps the next useful contribution I can make to the housing crisis is not simply to present another housing mechanism.

Perhaps it is also to ask:

What needs to change in the Human Agency of the people and structures involved for us to become better at solving the housing problem together?

Section 7 — What Does This Case Reveal?

7.1 Looking back with a language I did not then possess

The housing journey described in the preceding sections took place before I had developed Arbitrium or begun describing Human Agency in the terms I use today.

It would therefore be wrong to reinterpret every event as though the people involved — including me — were consciously making choices through an Arbitrium framework.

We were not.

But that creates an interesting possibility.

What might have been different had we possessed a shared language that encouraged us to become more conscious of **how we were responding to one another and to the problem itself?**

Not:

Would Arbitrium have made government accept my proposal?

There is no basis for making that claim.

A much more useful question is:

Would greater awareness of our Human Agency have improved the quality of the choices, conversations and responses through which the proposal was considered?

That question can be explored.

7.2 Was our response intentional?

At the centre of Arbitrium is a deceptively simple interruption:

Was that an intentional response?

Applied retrospectively to this case, that question can be directed at everybody involved.

It can be directed at the Minister encountering an unfamiliar proposal.

It can be directed at the civil servant working within established policy.

It can be directed at the bank considering an unconventional financial structure.

It can be directed at the MP deciding how far to pursue something outside their direct responsibility.

And it can be directed at me when another letter, rejection or lack of response increased my frustration.

The purpose of the question is not to imply that an intentional response would necessarily have been favourable to NPFM.

An entirely intentional and well-considered response could have been:

No.

What might have been different is the quality of the process through which that answer was reached.

A conscious rejection after genuine examination is very different from an automatic rejection because something is unfamiliar, inconvenient, outside precedent or apparently somebody else's responsibility.

Human Agency does not require agreement.

It requires greater awareness of the choice being made.

7.3 Perception changes what we see

The case also raises questions about perception.

During the earlier period, I entered government as an outsider seeking consideration of an unconventional housing proposal.

On another occasion I entered a professional environment as someone engaged by the Royal Town Planning Institute to teach professionals how to value land.

The same individual could therefore be encountered through two very different structures.

Applicant with an idea.

Professional with expertise.

My knowledge did not suddenly change when the context changed.

But the way another person perceived me potentially could.

We cannot establish from the evidence how particular individuals perceived me, and the case study should not pretend that we can.

The episode nevertheless illustrates a wider Human Agency principle:

We do not respond only to information. We respond to our perception of the information, the person presenting it and the context in which we encounter them.

Structure can therefore influence Human Agency before any conscious decision is made.

A title, organisation, department, professional status, political position or institutional process can affect what receives attention and how it is interpreted.

That matters wherever unfamiliar thinking needs to be heard.

7.4 The power and danger of automatic response

Organisations could not function if every decision required complete reconsideration from first principles.

Much human and institutional behaviour must therefore rely upon established patterns, procedures and previous experience.

Automatic responses are not inherently bad.

They make complex systems possible.

The danger arises when an automatic response continues after the circumstances that created it have changed, or when established process prevents people from noticing that a different response may now be required.

The housing case repeatedly raises that possibility.

The housing shortage persisted.

Governments introduced new initiatives.

Ministers changed.

Targets changed.

Funding mechanisms changed.

Planning policy changed.

Yet the underlying difficulty persisted.

This does not prove that the same mistake was simply being repeated.

But it does justify asking:

At what point should persistence of the problem itself become a stimulus to question the assumptions underlying our established response?

Learning requires more than accumulating experience.

It requires allowing experience to change the choices we subsequently make.

7.5 Individual responsibility within structure

The case also illustrates why Human Agency cannot be considered separately from structure.

Individuals do not make choices in a vacuum.

A civil servant operates within departmental responsibilities and government policy.

A Minister operates within political priorities, collective government, Parliamentary constraints and limited time.

A bank operates within regulation, risk requirements and commercial responsibility.

A local authority operates within legislation, budgets, democratic accountability and professional advice.

A developer operates within planning, finance, land availability, market demand and commercial viability.

These structures influence the choices available.

But influence is not the same as complete determination.

The Sajid Javid correspondence provides a small but useful example.

He could not accommodate a meeting.

That was a constraint.

But within that constraint another choice remained: the proposal could simply have been declined, or another route could be offered.

A route was offered through officials.

Similarly, Sarah Newton could not personally change housing legislation. She could choose whether to use the influence available to her to help the proposal reach those who might.

She did.

Structure defines part of the choice environment. Human Agency operates within it.

The two cannot sensibly be separated.

7.6 The problem of changing leadership

The repeated change of Housing Ministers introduces another dimension.

A long-term national problem requires continuity of purpose.

The individuals occupying leadership roles will inevitably change.

A structure therefore needs to achieve two things simultaneously:

allow new leaders to exercise their own Human Agency while preserving sufficient continuity of the collective objective.

Too much rigidity and new leadership cannot respond intelligently to changing circumstances.

Too little continuity and each leadership change risks another reset.

The housing journey raises the possibility that an unfamiliar proposal requiring sustained understanding is particularly vulnerable to such changes.

People leave.

Knowledge leaves with them.

Relationships disappear.

Priorities change.

The incoming individual encounters the issue afresh.

This is not primarily a criticism of the people concerned.

It is a question about the structure.

What carries the vision when the visionary, champion or responsible Minister changes?

A system designed to address long-term problems cannot rely upon continuity of individuals.

It needs continuity of purpose.

7.7 Silos and the missing finish line

Housing makes the consequences of divided responsibility particularly visible.

No single participant controls all the ingredients necessary to increase housing supply.

Planning can perform its role.

Treasury can perform its role.

Banks can perform theirs.

Local authorities can perform theirs.

Developers can perform theirs.

Housing departments can perform theirs.

Parliament can perform its role.

Each participant may make a defensible decision from within their own responsibilities.

Yet the collective result can still be insufficient housing.

This returns us to the relay-race metaphor.

Each runner can successfully complete their section.

Each can correctly hand over the baton.

Each can be measured as having performed their task.

But:

Who owns the finish line?

The housing crisis is not ultimately solved when a department completes its process.

It is solved when sufficient suitable homes become available to the people who need them at a cost they can afford.

That is the collective outcome against which the system ultimately exists.

7.8 Shared involvement does not remove individual responsibility

This case therefore exposes an apparent tension within one of the developing principles of Human Agency:

Involvement can be shared. Unique responsibility cannot.

Housing involves thousands of people whose actions contribute to the outcome.

Responsibility for the entire housing market cannot sensibly be placed upon any one of them.

But at every individual choice point, somebody still makes a response.

Refer it.

Investigate it.

Challenge it.

Support it.

Reject it.

Ignore it.

Ask another question.

Seek another opinion.

Change direction.

Continue doing what was done before.

Each individual remains responsible for the response they make within the choices genuinely available to them.

Collective complexity does not eliminate individual agency.

The challenge is connecting those individual acts of agency sufficiently well that they contribute towards a shared outcome.

7.9 The same examination must include me

The principle cannot stop at the doors of government.

Throughout this case I was also responding.

I interpreted silence.

I interpreted rejection.

I formed views about people's motives.

I became frustrated.

I persisted.

Sometimes I changed my approach.

Sometimes I returned to the same approach and knocked on another door.

Looking backwards, I can ask myself exactly the same question:

Was my response intentional?

Sometimes I believe it was.

On other occasions, frustration probably narrowed what I could see.

Perhaps I became so convinced that people needed to understand my solution that I became less curious about what their response was telling me.

Perhaps persistence sometimes helped.

Perhaps at other times it prevented me from recognising that I needed a fundamentally different route.

The value of Human Agency cannot depend upon using it to explain what other people should have done differently.

It begins with recognising my own choices.

7.10 What might a shared language have changed?

This brings the case to a hypothetical but important question.

Imagine that the people involved had shared a simple language around Human Agency.

Not a language requiring agreement.

Not a process designed to make people accept innovation.

Simply a shared ability to recognise a **Choice Point** and ask:

Was that an intentional response?

A Minister might still have said no.

A civil servant might still have identified an insurmountable problem.

A bank might still have declined to participate.

I might still have decided to continue.

But perhaps the conversation could have contained different questions:

What exactly are we responding to?

What assumptions are influencing our response?

Are we protecting an important principle, or merely following precedent?

What have we learned from previous attempts?

Is this genuinely somebody else's responsibility?

What choice is actually available to me?

Does my response contribute towards the shared objective?

What will happen when the person currently responsible moves on?

None of those questions guarantees a particular outcome.

Their purpose is to improve **Response Ability** — our ability to respond more consciously to what is actually in front of us.

7.11 From individual agency to collective capability

This may be one of the most important lessons emerging from the case.

Housing does not suffer from a shortage of intelligent people.

Nor is there an obvious shortage of effort.

Across government, local authorities, finance, planning, construction, housing associations and professional organisations are people working hard within their areas of responsibility.

The challenge may lie partly elsewhere.

A complex system needs more than capable individuals.

It needs those individuals to exercise their agency in ways that can connect across boundaries, survive changes of personnel, learn collectively from experience and remain orientated towards a sufficiently shared purpose.

That suggests a distinction:

Individual Human Agency concerns the quality of my choices.

Collective Human Agency concerns our capacity to connect those choices towards a shared outcome.

Structure can either help or hinder that connection.

7.12 What the case does — and does not — establish

This case does not establish that NPFM or HIPP would have solved the UK housing crisis.

It does not establish that Ministers or civil servants deliberately prevented innovation.

It does not establish that better Human Agency would automatically have resulted in the proposal being adopted.

And it does not establish that structural reform alone would solve housing.

What the case does provide is a documented and remembered journey through which questions about Human Agency become visible.

An unfamiliar idea encountered institutions.

Different people responded differently.

The idea changed in response.

Leadership changed.

Responsibility moved.

Structure enabled some choices and constrained others.

The problem persisted.

And the individual pursuing the idea changed through the experience as well.

That is sufficient to justify a larger question:

Could strengthening Human Agency — individually, collectively and structurally — improve our capacity to address persistent problems that existing approaches have repeatedly failed to resolve?

The Housing Market Case Study cannot answer that question by itself.

But it gives us a real-world place from which to begin asking it.

7.13 The lesson is not the experience — it is what we do with it

Every individual and every institution accumulates experience.

Experience alone does not guarantee development.

What matters is whether we become sufficiently conscious of that experience to learn from it and allow the learning to influence our next response.

That applies to me.

It applies to organisations.

It applies to government.

And it applies to society.

For many years I regarded this housing journey largely as a frustrating attempt to get an idea heard.

I now see something else within it.

The experience was providing material from which I was learning about choice, perception, responsibility, structure, frustration, persistence and response.

I simply did not yet possess a language that connected them.

Today I call the capacity underlying those choices **Human Agency.**

Arbitrium seeks to make that capacity more visible and strengthen our ability to use it intentionally.

That does not change what happened.

But it may change what we choose to learn from it.

And perhaps that is the most important choice the case study contains.

Section 8 — From Case Study to Future Application

8.1 The case study does not end in 2025

It would be possible to end this case study with the most recent correspondence.

That would make it a historical record.

But the housing problem that caused the journey to begin still exists.

Indeed, my concern about housing predates Genesis by many years. In my view, the origins of the present housing shortage stretch back approximately fifty years.

That changes the significance of what has been learned.

The question is no longer simply:

Why did Genesis, NPFM or HIPP not progress?

Nor is it:

Who should have done something differently?

The more useful question is:

What can we learn from this journey that might improve how we respond to the housing problem now?

That moves the case from reflection towards application.

8.2 A fifty-year problem

My diagnosis of the housing shortage begins with a structural change that occurred decades before Genesis.

Britain once had two substantial sources of new housing.

The private market built homes for sale.

Alongside it, local authorities built large numbers of council homes.

In my analysis, the major decline in overall housing delivery began when large-scale council housebuilding was substantially withdrawn during the 1970s and subsequent years.

One significant source of supply was progressively removed without another market of comparable scale taking its place.

The private development industry remained, but it operates according to different economic conditions.

Private developers do not simply build according to the number of homes society needs. They build homes into a market in which purchasers must be willing and financially able to buy them.

Mortgage availability, interest rates, confidence, affordability and sales rates therefore influence how quickly that market can absorb new homes.

My conclusion was that expecting the existing private market alone to replace the missing supply was unrealistic.

The problem was not simply:

How do we make the existing housing market build more?

A different question was required:

What replaced the housing market that had been substantially removed?

My conclusion was:

Nothing sufficient had.

That diagnosis eventually became fundamental to HIPP.

8.3 Creating the missing market

Seen from that perspective, HIPP was not intended simply as another way of helping people purchase homes within the existing housing market.

I was attempting to create an **additional market**.

The HIPP material described this explicitly as creating a new marketplace to replace the one that had been taken away.

The intention was to create additional lower steps onto the housing ladder by treating the land and building elements differently and allowing different organisations to participate in their provision and funding.

Local authorities, registered providers, Homes England, contractors, financial institutions and purchasers could potentially perform different roles from those found within the conventional private housing market.

Whether HIPP itself ultimately provides the right mechanism remains open to examination.

But the distinction behind it is important:

I was not simply attempting to increase the output of the remaining market. I was attempting to recreate the missing source of housing supply in a different form.

That is why a trial became so important.

Rather than asking government to accept the entire proposition in theory, a development could provide evidence of whether an alternative market could work in practice.

8.4 Starting with the outcome

This brings the case back to the distinction between the purpose of a system and the processes through which that system operates.

Housing involves planning policy, land, infrastructure, finance, legislation, local government, central government, housing providers, developers, lenders, skills and materials.

All are necessary.

But none is the ultimate purpose.

The purpose is:

people need sufficient suitable homes they can afford.

That does not mean every participant should abandon their individual responsibilities in pursuit of that objective.

Quite the opposite.

Their specialist responsibilities matter.

But those responsibilities need to exist within a sufficiently clear understanding of the collective outcome they are intended to serve.

This suggests a different starting question:

What housing outcome are we collectively trying to create, and how does each of our individual responsibilities contribute towards it?

8.5 Who owns the finish line?

The relay-race metaphor that emerged during this case study captures the difficulty.

Different participants carry different parts of the housing baton.

Planning deals with planning.

Treasury deals with public finance.

Banks deal with lending and risk.

Developers deal with commercially viable delivery.

Local authorities deal with their responsibilities.

Housing providers deal with their funding and delivery obligations.

Government departments operate within their allocated responsibilities.

Each runner can perform their section competently.

But housing is not solved by successfully completing the individual sections.

The race has an outcome.

That creates the question:

Who owns the finish line?

Perhaps nobody should own it alone.

But somebody — or some structure — needs responsibility for ensuring that the participants remain sufficiently connected to the shared objective.

Otherwise coordination itself can become nobody's unique responsibility.

8.6 Continuity beyond the individual leader

The repeated turnover of Housing Ministers reinforces this point.

Political leadership will change. That is inherent in democratic government.

The answer cannot therefore be to find one exceptional Housing Minister and hope they remain in office long enough to solve the problem.

Nor should long-term purpose prevent an incoming government or Minister from exercising judgement and changing direction.

The challenge is to create sufficient continuity beneath those changes.

A fifty-year problem requires more than a one- or two-year memory.

Knowledge needs to survive the people who acquired it.

Learning needs to survive the administration in which it occurred.

Promising work should not automatically lose momentum because its sponsor moves role.

New leaders need to be able to understand why previous decisions were made, not simply inherit the decisions themselves.

This suggests an important relationship between Human Agency and structure:

Good structure should preserve learning and purpose without removing choice from the next person.

Continuity should support agency, not replace it.

8.7 Creating permission to question

A system dealing with a persistent problem needs stability.

It also needs the capacity to recognise when existing approaches are insufficient.

Those requirements can conflict.

People responsible for public money, regulation, planning or lending should not embrace every unfamiliar proposal merely because it is new.

But neither should unfamiliarity itself become a reason not to explore something.

The challenge is therefore not to make institutions less rigorous.

It is to make **curiosity part of the rigour**.

A healthy response to an unconventional idea need not be:

Yes, let's do it.

Nor need it be:

No, that's not how we do things.

It could begin:

What would we need to understand before deciding whether this deserves further exploration?

That does not prejudge the answer.

It improves the quality of the question.

8.8 A shared focus on the outcome

This is where strengthening Human Agency may eventually have something practical to contribute.

Not by telling housing professionals what decisions they should make.

Not by replacing expertise.

Not by deciding housing policy.

And certainly not by requiring people to agree.

Its potential contribution begins with something more fundamental: helping people remain conscious of the **shared purpose for which they are together**.

Imagine a difficult discussion involving government, finance, planning, housing providers, local authorities and developers.

Each participant brings legitimate responsibilities, expertise, constraints and interests.

An objection is raised.

A proposal conflicts with precedent.

One organisation identifies a risk.

Another identifies a legal obstacle.

Someone concludes that responsibility belongs elsewhere.

Each response may be entirely reasonable when viewed from the position of the individual making it.

But another question remains:

Does this response help us move towards solving the housing problem we are collectively here to address, or does it create another hurdle without helping us find a way beyond it?

That question does not remove anybody's individual responsibility.

A bank should still identify unacceptable financial risk.

A civil servant should still identify legal difficulties.

A planner should still identify planning consequences.

A Minister should still exercise political judgement.

But identifying an obstacle need not necessarily end the conversation.

It can become the beginning of another question:

Given that this obstacle exists, what might we do about it?

A complex problem will inevitably produce obstacles.

The collective challenge is whether those obstacles become reasons for stopping or problems to be understood and, where possible, overcome.

Strengthening Human Agency may therefore help people retain sight of the shared outcome while continuing to exercise their own individual responsibilities.

The objective is not agreement.

It is to improve our collective capacity to keep moving intelligently towards the purpose that brought us together:

Helping create sufficient suitable homes that people can afford.

8.9 The value of the trial

HIPP increasingly moved towards precisely this proposition.

Rather than asking for immediate adoption of a new housing structure, I sought a trial through which it could be tested.

Looking back, the significance of that approach extends beyond HIPP itself.

Trials create a bridge between theory and evidence.

They allow an organisation to remain appropriately cautious while still creating the possibility of learning.

That suggests another useful question for complex systems:

When an unfamiliar idea cannot yet provide the evidence required for widespread adoption, does the structure provide a safe route through which evidence can be created?

Without such a route, innovation faces a circular problem:

It cannot be adopted because it has not been demonstrated.

It cannot be demonstrated because it has not been adopted.

Somebody has to recognise that circle and intentionally create another route.

8.10 Response Ability in a complex system

Housing requires enormous technical capability.

But complex problems also require the human capacity to respond constructively when interests, perspectives and responsibilities conflict.

That includes the ability to listen, question assumptions, recognise genuine constraints, remain curious about unfamiliar ideas, learn from outcomes and retain sight of a shared objective.

These capabilities are not substitutes for housing expertise.

They influence how effectively different areas of housing expertise can work together.

A system can contain highly capable individuals and still struggle collectively when their choices remain disconnected.

That distinction lies close to the heart of this case.

8.11 From individual learning to institutional learning

The case also raises a larger question about learning.

Individuals can learn from experience.

But institutions need structures through which individual learning becomes collective memory.

Otherwise an organisation can repeatedly contain intelligent, experienced people while continually losing part of what those people learned.

Ministerial turnover makes this particularly visible, but the principle applies throughout organisations.

People retire.

People move departments.

Governments change.

Companies restructure.

Responsibilities move.

The question therefore becomes:

Where does the learning live when the people leave?

Documents preserve information.

They do not necessarily preserve understanding.

A structure capable of strengthening collective Human Agency would need to help people inherit not merely records of previous decisions, but sufficient understanding to reconsider those decisions intelligently.

8.12 Fifty years of experience — but what have we learned?

This brings the case to perhaps its most uncomfortable question.

The housing problem has persisted, in different forms and at different levels of severity, for approximately half a century.

During that time Britain has accumulated enormous experience.

There have been numerous Housing Ministers.

Successive governments have introduced housing initiatives.

Planning policies have been changed.

Funding mechanisms have been created.

Targets have been announced.

Reviews have been undertaken.

The existence of experience, however, is not the same as learning from experience.

Learning occurs when experience changes what we subsequently do.

A persistent problem should therefore eventually cause us to ask not merely:

What should we do next?

but:

What have our previous responses taught us about the assumptions on which we continue to act?

Continuing to work harder within an existing structure may sometimes be the right response.

At other times, persistence of the problem may itself be evidence that part of the structure needs to be questioned.

Recognising the difference requires Human Agency.

8.13 Revisiting the housing proposition

None of this means that NPFM or HIPP should now automatically be revived.

They would need to be examined against today's legal, financial, political and housing environment.

Some assumptions may remain valid.

Others may not.

The models themselves may need further development.

Human Agency requires the same standard from me that it asks of everyone else.

I should not respond to today's housing problem automatically with:

I already have the answer.

A more useful position is:

What have I learned, what has changed, what remains relevant, and what deserves examination now?

That leaves open the possibility that elements of the original proposition may still have value.

It also leaves open another possibility: that the experience contributes to solving housing not only through the financial and tenure ideas it produced, but through what it reveals about the human behaviour surrounding complex change.

Those possibilities are not mutually exclusive.

8.14 A different way to begin the housing conversation

The housing debate frequently begins with proposed solutions.

Build more homes.

Change planning.

Release more land.

Increase funding.

Support first-time buyers.

Build more social housing.

Change taxation.

Each may have merit.

But the history examined in this case suggests that another question might usefully come before them:

Do the people and institutions whose choices collectively determine the outcome possess sufficient shared purpose, continuity, curiosity and Human Agency to solve the problem together?

Without that capacity, individual interventions may improve parts of the system without sufficiently changing its overall outcome.

Human Agency is therefore not another housing policy.

It sits beneath policy.

Policies are created, interpreted, implemented, resisted, adapted and changed by people.

The quality of those human choices influences what the system ultimately produces.

8.15 The unfinished opportunity

This case began with my response to the financial crisis of 2008.

But the problem I was attempting to address had much deeper roots.

My eventual conclusion was that Britain had substantially removed one source of housing supply without creating a sufficient replacement market.

Genesis began by questioning property finance.

NPFM developed the separation of land and building value.

HIPP increasingly attempted to turn that principle into a practical new housing market and ultimately a trial through which the proposition could be tested.

For much of those years I judged success by whether my proposal progressed.

Measured that way, the journey produced considerable frustration.

Looking at it now produces another perspective.

The journey exposed the interaction between individuals and structure.

It demonstrated the fragility of continuity when people change.

It revealed the difference between individual responsibility and collective outcome.

It showed how perception can influence response.

It demonstrated both the value and limitation of persistence.

And it repeatedly confronted me with the need to choose what to do when the response I wanted did not occur.

Those experiences became part of a much larger journey towards Human Agency and Arbitrium.

That does not retrospectively make my housing proposal right.

Nor does it turn eighteen years of frustration into success.

But it means the experience need not be wasted.

The housing crisis remains.

The underlying diagnosis deserves examination.

Elements of NPFM and HIPP remain available to be reconsidered rather than assumed to be either right or wrong.

And another proposition has now emerged from the journey:

Perhaps our capacity to solve a problem that has persisted for half a century depends not only upon finding better housing policies, but upon strengthening the Human Agency through which people across the whole system understand, question, choose, learn and work towards a shared outcome.

That proposition deserves examination too.

Section 9 — Conclusions and Questions for Further Exploration

9.1 What began as a housing story

This case study began with a relatively straightforward intention.

I wanted to understand what had happened during my long attempt to introduce a different approach to the UK housing market.

The surviving correspondence provided a record stretching from Genesis and the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, through NPFM and government consideration of the proposal, to the later development of HIPP and my continuing attempts to find another route forward.

Initially, I expected the story principally to demonstrate the difficulty of getting an unfamiliar idea considered within a large institutional system.

It does demonstrate that.

But looking at the whole journey reveals something considerably broader.

It is a story about people.

9.2 A system is ultimately human

Government can appear to be an entity.

So can the Civil Service.

So can a bank, local authority, developer or housing provider.

But none makes a decision.

People do.

Those people operate within structures that define responsibilities, provide authority, impose constraints, preserve experience and influence behaviour.

But at every point within those structures, human beings interpret information and respond.

The housing journey contains many such responses.

Some people became curious.

Some challenged.

Some helped.

Some referred the matter elsewhere.

Some identified obstacles.

Some chose not to pursue it.

Some appeared constrained by the structure around them.

And I responded to every one of those responses in turn.

The resulting journey was therefore not created by one decision.

It emerged from thousands of human interactions and choices over many years.

That is Human Agency at work.

9.3 No villains are required

Perhaps one of the most important conclusions is that a persistent system failure does not require incompetent or ill-intentioned people.

A Minister can make a reasonable decision.

A civil servant can properly follow policy.

A bank can responsibly manage risk.

A local authority can comply with its obligations.

A developer can respond rationally to market demand.

An MP can operate within Parliamentary convention.

Each decision can make sense from the position of the person making it.

And the combined outcome can still fail to solve the problem.

That shifts the question away from:

Who is to blame?

towards:

What is preventing individually reasonable choices from combining into the outcome we collectively need?

That is a much more difficult question.

It may also be a much more useful one.

9.4 Structure matters — but structure is not enough

The case strongly reinforces the importance of structure.

Long-term problems require continuity.

Institutional learning needs somewhere to live.

Responsibility needs to be clear.

People working in different areas need ways of connecting their specialist responsibilities to a shared objective.

New leadership needs freedom to choose without requiring the system to forget what it previously learned.

But structures themselves do not act.

People create them.

People interpret them.

People operate within them.

People sometimes hide behind them.

And people can choose to question them.

The relationship therefore works in both directions:

Structure influences Human Agency, and Human Agency influences structure.

Neither can be understood properly without the other.

9.5 The question of learning

Perhaps the most striking feature of the housing crisis is its longevity.

Approximately fifty years of difficulty represents an enormous accumulation of experience.

But experience and learning are not the same thing.

Experience becomes learning only when it changes the way we subsequently understand and respond.

That applies to institutions.

It also applies to individuals.

For many years I regarded much of this journey as frustration.

I was trying to get people to see something that appeared obvious to me.

Looking back, I can now ask a different question:

What was the experience trying to teach me?

Some of the answers are uncomfortable.

Persistence can become repetition.

Conviction can affect curiosity.

Frustration can influence perception.

Being right about part of a problem does not mean being right about the whole solution.

Other lessons are more encouraging.

People can choose curiosity.

Individuals can exercise agency within restrictive structures.

Ideas can evolve through challenge.

Failure to achieve one intended outcome can produce learning that becomes valuable somewhere else.

The important distinction is whether we notice.

9.6 From housing to Human Agency

I did not set out in 2008 to develop Human Agency.

I was attempting to solve a housing and financial problem.

But the years that followed repeatedly exposed me to choice, responsibility, perception, fear, uncertainty, structure, leadership, persistence, learning and human response.

Those experiences did not constitute Arbitrium.

But I can now see that they became part of the journey that eventually led towards it.

That changes my own understanding of those years.

What I once saw largely as a prolonged failure to get a housing idea adopted, I can now also see as an extended real-world education in how human beings behave within systems.

The housing journey did not give me a theory.

It gave me experience from which a theory could eventually emerge.

9.7 The common thread: choice

The questions raised by this case may appear to concern different things — leadership, structure, institutional memory, innovation, silos, responsibility and learning.

But beneath each of them lies something common.

Choice.

A new Minister represents change.

A new policy represents change.

A financial crisis creates change.

New evidence changes what we know.

Experience changes what we have available to learn from.

But none of those things guarantees progress.

Change is inevitable. Progress is not.

Progress depends upon what human beings choose to do in response to change.

That makes understanding choice particularly important.

Our choices do not emerge independently of everything around us. They are influenced by what we perceive, what we already believe, what we have previously experienced, what we fear, what we understand, the responsibilities we hold and the structures within which we operate.

The questions raised throughout this case therefore begin to connect:

When leadership changes, what do we choose to preserve and what do we choose to reconsider?

When experience accumulates, what do we choose to learn from it?

When precedent provides reassurance, when do we choose to question it?

When an unfamiliar idea creates uncertainty, do we choose simply to avoid the uncertainty or to understand it?

When our individual responsibility ends before the collective problem is solved, what do we choose to do next?

When an obstacle is identified, do we choose to treat it as the end of the journey or ask whether another route exists?

When repeated responses fail to produce the outcome we seek, what enables us to choose differently?

None of these questions assumes that there is one correct choice.

The important issue is whether we understand sufficiently what is influencing our response to recognise that a choice exists at all.

That may be the common thread running through the entire Housing Market Case Study.

The housing system has experienced enormous change during the period examined here.

It has also accumulated decades of experience.

Yet the underlying problem persists.

Perhaps, therefore, the question is not simply whether we need more change.

It is:

How do we become better at understanding the choices through which change becomes progress?

That question sits at the heart of Human Agency.

9.8 An unfinished case

The Housing Market Case Study therefore remains unfinished in two senses.

The first is obvious.

Britain still has a housing problem.

The original proposition that eventually became NPFM and HIPP has never been tested in the form envisaged. Whether elements of it could contribute to today's housing market remains an open question requiring fresh examination rather than assumption.

But there is another unfinished experiment.

Human Agency and Arbitrium have emerged partly from experiences such as those examined in this case.

They now create an opportunity to return to complex problems with a different understanding of the human element within them.

That does not mean applying a predetermined answer.

It means becoming better able to examine how we are choosing, responding, learning and working together.

So perhaps this eighteen-year journey has not reached its conclusion.

It may simply have changed its purpose.

The question with which it began was:

How might we change the housing market?

The question it leaves us with is larger:

How might strengthening Human Agency improve our ability to change it together?

Explore the Housing Market Case Study

The full Housing Market Case Study, Executive Paper and Supporting Evidence Research Pack are freely available at:

www.arbitrium.uk

Look at the journey. Look at the evidence. Draw your own conclusions.

Scan to explore the Housing Market Case Study and supporting evidence.

Michael A Griffin
Founder — Arbitrium®